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 By AT NARA Date 9/24/77

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 FM THE SITUATION ROOM//TOHAK19//

TO ADAMS FOR THE SECRETARY

S E C R E T SENSITIVE VIA BLACK PATCH WH51102

TOHAK19

TO: SECRETARY KISSINGER
 FROM: RICHARD H. SOLOMON

SUBJECT: A PRESIDENTIAL GOOD-HEALTH
 MESSAGE FOR CHOU EN-LAI

1. WE NOW HAVE CONFIRMATION FROM A COMBINATION OF CHINESE AND FOREIGN PRESS SOURCES THAT PREMIER CHOU EN-LAI IS IN IMPROVED HEALTH AND HAS LEFT THE HOSPITAL IN PEKING WHERE HE HAS BEEN RECUPERATING DURING THE PAST YEAR. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER IN TERMS OF OUR CURRENTLY RATHER INACTIVE RELATIONS WITH PEKING, AND IN VIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S ANTICIPATED TRIP LATER THIS YEAR, YOU MIGHT WISH TO MAKE SOME SYMBOLIC GESTURE AS A WAY OF PREPARING THE MOOD

2. IN THE ABSENSE OF GUIDANCE ON WHAT YOU AND THE PRESIDENT MIGHT WANT TO ACCOMPLISH ON THE PEKING TRIP, IT IS DIFFICULT TO FINE-TUNE THE KINDS OF SYMBOLIC GESTURES OF WHICH THE CHINESE ARE SO FOND. IT IS CLEAR SINCE THE TENG HSIAO-PING JUNE 2 STATEMENT TO THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER EDITORS THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL BE WELCOME IN CHINA WHETHER OR NOT HE HAS MAJOR BUSINESS TO CONCLUDE THAT PRC LEADERS ARE CONCERNED THAT HE MIGHT POSTPONE THE SUMMIT BECAUSE OF A FEELING THAT THERE CAN BE NO SIGNIFICANT RESULT FROM A SUMMIT MEETING UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN, MOREOVER, AMBASSADOR BUSH'S BACKCHANNEL TODAY (PEKING 94) REPORTING CHOU EN-LAI'S RECENT CONVERSATION WITH THE CHINESE-AMERICAN DOCTOR C.P. LI. (LI WAS PERSONALLY RECEIVED BY MAO, A SCHOOL-AGE ACQUAINTANCE, IN 1973.) WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER LI'S MENTION TO BUSH OF A UNILATERAL PRC STATEMENT OF PEACEFUL:

*****WHSR COMMENT*****

MC FARLANE, ROOMAN, SEC FLE

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INTENTIONS TOWARD TAIWAN MADE FOR "DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION" IN A CHOU SIGNAL OR A LI INITIATIVE. IN ANY EVENT, YOU SHOULD DO YOUR OWN EXPLORING OF PRC INTENTIONS DIRECTLY. WE DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE CHINESE ARE AS INTERESTED AS EVER IN VISIBLE SIGNS OF PROGRESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP, GIVEN THEIR POST-INDOCHINA ANXIETIES ABOUT SOVIET ACTIVITIES ON THEIR PERIPHERY.

3. IN RELATED REPORTING ON THE CHOU EN-LAI - C.P. LI MEETING, BUSH INDICATES THAT MUCH OF THEIR CONVERSATION WAS TAKEN UP BY CHOU DISCUSSING WITH LI HIS APPRECIATION OF FRESH FRUIT. CHOU GAVE LI SOME FRESH LYCHEES AT THE END OF THEIR TALK.

4. IF YOU WISH TO SEND A SIGNAL TO THE CHINESE WHICH WOULD BEGIN TO BUILD A MORE POSITIVE MOOD IN ADVANCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP, I SUGGEST A BRIEF LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE PREMIER CONVEYING PLEASURE AT THE NEWS THAT HE IS IN IMPROVED HEALTH, AND EXPRESSING HIS (FORD'S) ANTICIPATION OF HOLDING TALKS IN PEKING LATER THIS YEAR. IF YOU WISH TO ADD A CHINESE TWIST TO THE MESSAGE, ONE WHICH WOULD HAVE POSITIVE SYMBOLIC VALUE IN CHINESE EYES QUITE APART FROM THE CHOU-LI DISCUSSION, YOU MIGHT HAVE THE PRESIDENT SEND THE PREMIER A BOX OF FRUIT AS AN EXPRESSION OF PLEASURE AT HIS RETURN TO GOOD HEALTH. SUCH AN ACT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BUILD ON THE CHOU-LI CONVERSATION, AND YOU MAY NOT WISH TO REINFORCE THAT SIGNAL. MOREOVER, YOU SHOULD ANTICIPATE THAT THE CHINESE MIGHT PUBLICIZE, OR AT LEAST CIRCULATE WIDELY IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL CHANNELS, SUCH A PRESIDENTIAL GESTURE.

5. THE TEXT OF A SUGGESTED PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE, WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN CLEARED WITH PAUL THEIS, COULD BE AS FOLLOWS:

DEAR MR. PREMIER:

I WAS PLEASED TO RECEIVE NEWS OF YOUR IMPROVED HEALTH, AND OF THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR MEETING IN PEKING LATER THIS YEAR TO DISCUSS A RANGE OF ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN.

AS A TOKEN OF MY GOOD WISHES, I AM SENDING YOU A SMALL GIFT OF (PEACHES/PEARS/FRUIT).

SINCERELY

GRF

6. PLEASE INSTRUCT WHETHER YOU WISH SUCH A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE TO BE SENT, AND WHETHER YOU WANT THE FRUIT INCLUDED.